Cold Weather and Energy Consumption

They say there are only two things that are certain: death and taxes. However, there is a third certainty – when temperatures plunge or soar, energy usage and electric bills go up.

In the VEC service area, temperatures typically start dropping dramatically in December and January. The temperature change prompts many to call and ask why the December bill is so much higher than the November bill.

If our members heat their home using electricity, the answer is pretty straightforward – the lower the outdoor temperature goes, the more power a home’s heating system must apply to raise the indoor temperature to a comfortable level.

For example, if the outdoor temperature is 60 degrees and a home’s thermostat is set at 70 degrees, the heating system will have to use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature by 10 degrees.

However, if the outdoor temperature drops to 20 degrees, the home’s heating system will have to use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature by 50 degrees to maintain the thermostat setting of 70 degrees that’s five times as much energy.

Even if the homeowner lowers the thermostat to 65 degrees during the cold snap (which is too cool for most people), the heating system will still have to use enough energy to raise the indoor temperature by 45 degrees. That’s more than four times the energy than was used on the 70-degree day.

So when an energy consumer compares their fall bills to their winter bills, many times they are not comparing apples to apples. A more accurate similarity is to compare a January energy bill to winter bills, many times they are not comparing apples to apples.

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So when an energy consumer compares their fall bills to their winter bills, many times they are not comparing apples to apples. A more accurate similarity is to compare a January energy bill to another year’s January energy bill.

For more specific information about your energy usage visit our website www.vec.org and sign into your account. You can get the same information on your smartphone by downloading the SmartHub app from Google Play or the App Store.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative Scholarship Deadline is March 6

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) wants to reward students who have used their time and talents to benefit their local communities. VEC’s Lillard-Shadow scholarship program rewards academic and community service achievements by awarding four $2,000 scholarships to students who will graduate from high schools in VEC’s service area in the spring of 2020.

The scholarships honor J.W. Lillard and Willis A Shadow, two community leaders who spearheaded efforts to bring electric power to Decatur and Meigs County in the 1930s, forming the organization that would become Volunteer Energy Cooperative. Mr. Shadow and Mr. Lillard were instrumental in improving the lives and livelihoods of thousands of residents through electric power.

Four awards of $500 per semester each (renewable for up to four semesters) will be presented to spring 2019 high school graduates whose parents or guardians are VEC customers. Applications will be judged by an independent panel based on each student’s community service activities and citizenship - 40%; written communication skills – 20%; financial need – 25%; and academic achievement – 15%.

Scholarship applications are available at any VEC Customer Service Center or from high school counselors in the VEC service area. Applications are also available online at www.vec.org.

All application materials must be completed and delivered to VEC’s Corporate Office in Decatur no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 6, 2020.

We’re Thankful for Your Membership

“Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling.”

In the spirit of this quote by author and poet Henry Van Dyke, I’d like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for your membership in our electric cooperative. Because of your connection to Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC), we can make our community a better place.

I generally use my column to provide updates on new projects and developments and report out on the progress of ongoing initiatives. We share these updates so that all of our consumer-members have a window into our priorities, progress, and challenges. However, as a new year begins, I think it’s equally important to let you and other consumer-members of VEC know just what an impact you have on our cooperative and the greater community, likely in ways you may not even realize.

As part of the cooperative business model, one of our core principles is “Concern for Community.” While our priority is always to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy, we view our role in the community as a catalyst for good.

We work closely with our local schools to provide safety demonstrations, award college scholarships and support STEM programs. VEC also participates in an annual Youth Tour where we take our community’s brightest young people to Washington, D.C. for a week to experience democracy in action. The trip is inspirational for many students, and we are both humbled and honored to be a part of this leadership development journey. Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs. You empower the cooperative through your membership and your participation in and support of these programs.

When you attend cooperative events, alert us to problems, provide suggestions online, or share concerns with VEC employees you help us improve operations and thereby better serve the larger cooperative membership.

Because members of our community locally govern us, we can get a firsthand perspective on community priorities, such as high-speed broadband, community solar programs, equipment and technology upgrades, and electric vehicle programs. We are thankful that our cooperative board members carve out time to attend valuable training meetings. (continued on page 3)
The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is upon us – we want to help you make this winter a safe one. It’s as easy as 1,2,3 to make safety a part of your holiday with these tips.

Tackle one of these a day and you’re well on your way to keeping you and your family safe in the New Year.

Day 1 – What’s that noise?
Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and make sure everyone is aware of the sound emitted by these devices. Multiple alarms should be placed throughout the home and on every level.

Day 2 – Escape Route:
Go over the escape route with your family and any guest that might be staying at your home during the holiday season.

Day 3 – What a shocker?
Before use, inspect all electrical lights, decorations, and extension cords for damage. Cracked, loose or bare wires may cause a serious shock or can start a fire. Before you put these away after the holidays, give them another quick look.

Day 4 – Two’s company, three’s a crowd.
Do not overload outlets with too many decorations or devices. Overloading electrical outlets is a common cause of holiday fires.

Day 5 – Is it working?
Test your ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to make sure they are protecting you.

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sessions, participate in planning meetings and keep abreast of industry trends. This results in advisers that serve the cooperative’s interests in a way that our consumer-members expect and deserve.

On a more personal note, we appreciate the countless acts of kindness our linemen and other employees receive when they are working in severe weather and dangerous conditions. Our employees are thankful for your patience and consideration when we are trying to restore power during challenging situations and prolonged periods.

VEC was initially established 84 years ago to bring electricity to our area when no one else would. The cooperative is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. Together, let’s continue making our corner of the world a better place. We can’t do it without you.

The 12 Days of Holiday Safety
by Paige Finnell